

The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Hasmonean State

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Chapter Four

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Reviewed by Jim West

'There are substantial differences between the short account of this event [i.e., Alexander Jannaeus' war against Ptolemy Lathyrus] in the Jewish War I and the long account given in Jewish Antiquities XIII [by Josephus]' (p. 91). So begins Eshel's examination of 4Q161, which text he utilizes in an attempt to reconstruct the events of 103-102 BCE in this the shortest chapter of the book.

Eshel isn't the first to see this text as composed in that milieu and for it. He remarks 'In 1974, Joseph Amusin proposed connecting this pesher to Ptolemy Lathyrus' campaign against Alexander Jannaeus' (p. 97). Eshel spells out and supports that contention. And then he concludes, 'The mention of the Kittim in 4QpIsa^a led a few scholars to suppose that the pesher describes events related to the Roman period, and they did not associate the pesher with Ptolemy Lathyrus. ... I will show in chapter 9 [that] the Kittim in the Dead Sea Scrolls are at times identified with the Seleucids and at other times with the Romans. Therefore, there is no reason to reject the hypothesis that the Kittim mentioned in 4QpIsa^a are the Seleucids, just as they are in the *War Scroll*' (p. 100).

On this last point, it would be interesting to poll scholars of the Scrolls to get their take on it. I would be surprised if this point has been conceded. If so, then 'Kittim' is a variable term applied to differing groups, depending for its meaning on the particular context in which it is found. This would be unique in the Scrolls.